



FEZANA Age-Appropriate Lesson Plan

Subject Category (circle one): Religion/**Ceremony-Parsi** History Prayer
Gathas Comparative Religion Shahnameh

Age Group (circle one): PreK-K Grades 1-3 **Grades 4-5** Grades 6-8 Grades 9-12

Subject of the Lesson: Muktdad

Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

The sixth Gahambar festival celebrates the creation of human beings and is dedicated to the fravashis (guardian spirit). It is known as the festival of Hamaspathmaedaya in Avestan, Fravardigan in Pahlavi and Muktdad in Gujarati. Muktdad comes from the word Mukti – meaning end.

The Muktdads are the days to remember the Fravashis (guardian spirit) of the departed loved ones. Muktdad days are interconnected with the Calendar and therefore an understanding of the calendar is beneficial.

There are ten (10) days of Muktdad prayers. The first 5 days of Muktdad start with the last 5 days of the last month of the Zoroastrian calendar which are Roj Astad, Asman, Zamyad, Mahrespand and Aneran of Mah Asfandarmad. The next 5 days are known as the Gatha days and include, Gathas Ahunavad, Ushtavad, Spentomad, Vohu Khshathra and Vahistoisht.

60-70 years ago Muktdad prayers were performed in each household with each family having their own table. Presently, it is mostly done within the Fire Temple with vases dedicated to individual departed family member. Families may choose to maintain traditions at home too.

A Muktdad table (generally marble or stone table) consists of:

- A silver or metal flower vase in memory of the deceased – this is the same vase that was prayed upon on the 3rd day after the funeral (*Uthamna*) and later used for the Muktdad prayers. This represents Khshathra Vairya, creation of the sky
- Flowers - Represents Ameretat, the creation of the plants
- Water - represents Haurvatat, the creation of the water
- Milk - represents Vohu Manah, the creation of the animals
- Divo - represents Asha Vahishta, the creation of the fire
- Afarganyu - represents Asha Vahishta, the creation of the fire
- Sukhar and Loban - fragrant offering to the fire
- Fruits - offering
- Food: Generally consists of the deceased's favorite food
- Siyav and Kusti - White piece of cloth with a kusti to symbolically offer the Fravashis garments/clothes
- Namgrahan - List of names of deceased family member



Before starting prayers, mop and clean the area where prayers are going to be held. Wash all the implements known as *Alat*.

Prayers recited by the priest during the Muktdad rituals include the Afrinagan, Farokhshi, Stum and Baj. Afrin in Avestan means *to invite*. Muktdad days start with *inviting* the fravashis of the departed loved ones. Visiting family members can pray “Stum no Kardo” for the departed ones of the family (prayer for the fravashis of the deceased).

If more than one priest is praying – one can pray Afrinagan and the other can pray Farokhshi. If only one priest prays, then he recites both.

The fravardin yasht (13.14) states, "in that house in which clean and pure water and vegetation is placed, the holy fravashis agree to move about." also, fakra 13 – (in part) states: we have deep reverence for the good, strong, beneficent fravashis of the faithful who come and go through the world.

In the Fravadin Yasht, the Fravashis ask:

“Who will praise us, who will worship us, who will sing hymns to us, who will propitiate us with the hand containing meat (gaomata) and garments (vastravata) with the highest praise? Of which of us will be praised by name, of which of you will the soul be worshiped, to whom will the gift be given who may have everlasting food forever” (Yst 13.50).

The *Muktdad no Namaskar* - Humbandagi (communal prayer) recited at the end of the formal Muktdad prayers as a community.

On the eve of Navroz, an hour before dawn in Ushahin gāh, the priest prays all the prayers one more time to bid farewell to all the fravashis.

At the break of dawn, the priest prays in havan gah and performs the first machi of the year in an agairy. The congregation wishes each other Navroz mubarak.

For further information refer to the provided file “How to Celebrate the Muktdad – Adults Zoroastrian Studies – August 2021.”

Suggested Material:

1. Muktdad Slide (Power Point) presentation by Arnavaz Sethna

Vocabulary: Muktdad, Fravardigan, Fravadin Yasht, Fravashis, Hemaspathmaedaya, Gathas Ahunavad, Ushtavad, Spentomad, Vohu Khshathra, Vahistoisht, Namgrehan, Afringan, Farokhshi, Stum no Kardo, Baj, Muktdad no Namaskar.



Lesson for students:

1. Calendar math: Ask students how many days are in a year and how the regular calendar accounts for 365 $\frac{1}{4}$ year. Discuss what a leap year is. Now discuss how a Zoroastrian calendar has 30 days in each month adding to only 360 days. Ask for suggestions on how we can reconcile the remaining 5 days? Once students provide suggestions, describe how the Muktdad days help address this in Zoroastrianism.
2. Review the concepts of Fravashi & Divo and discuss their importance on these days. Discuss what it means to be human – the physical self which involves the body with its muscles and organs, and the spiritual self which involves the soul (urvan) and the guardian spirit (fravashi). During the Muktdad days, the emphasis is on the spiritual aspect of being human.

Activity for Students:

1. What does it mean to honor the dead? Look at pictures of how Zoroastrians offer bouquets and vases of flowers and conduct religious prayers as a community to remember their loved ones. Watch the movie “Coco.” How does the movie represent departed souls? Read about the Mexican celebration, Día de los Muertos, or Day of the Dead and compare the practices of celebrating the dead in the two cultures. Make a presentation to educate the larger community. Make Fravashi masks and also the typical Day of the Dead masks for further comparison.
2. Namgrehan (Write your family tree)
3. If you have a common meeting place - Create a Muktdad table together

Source:

1. The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra by Erach Taraporewala
2. Gatha Ba-Maani by Prof. Ervad Manek F. Kanga:
http://www.avesta.org/kanga/kanga_gathas.pdf
3. Teachings of Zarathushtra by T.R. Sethna
4. An Ethnic Perspective by Khojeste Mistree

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